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April 14, 1959

MEMORANDUM OF CONFERENCE WITH THE PRESIDENT  
April 13, 1959



Others present: Secretary Herter  
General Goodpaster

The President began by saying that Secretary Dulles has reached the conclusion he must quit as Secretary of State. The President asked Mr. Herter not to intimate this in any manner to anyone. He said that he and Mr. Dulles are giving themselves about a week to try two or three other possibilities in the way of cancer treatments.

The President said, however, that he must now think of a successor to Mr. Dulles. He said he has Mr. Herter in mind for the job. However, he first wishes Mr. Herter to go to a competent medical clinic and have a thorough and completely objective medical examination -- he wants the "whole bevy of doctors" to say that in their judgment Mr. Herter can carry the burdens of the job through the remainder of this administration.

Mr. Herter said he did not want the President to feel obliged in any sense to offer the job to him. The President said he had been very cold-blooded in approaching this question. The dominating fact is that the nation must not lose Mr. Herter's experience. The President said that he had himself given thought to two or three other people for the job, such as moving another Cabinet officer to the top post (he had Anderson in mind) or bringing Cabot Lodge down to take the job. He was concerned, however, at the possibility that this would involve losing Mr. Herter's experience. Accordingly, he has in mind for him to take the job provided that the doctors give a report that he will not be too seriously handicapped in getting around the world readily and quickly to carry out the duties of the office. If, however, Mr. Herter is physically unable to move up to the top post the President hopes he will stay in his present job.

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Mr. Herter asked if the President would think that the Johns Hopkins clinic would be satisfactory for this purpose. The President said he would, and would be quite ready to phone his brother Milton to arrange it should Mr. Herter so desire.

The President then said that Secretary Dulles wanted to talk with Mr. Herter regarding personnel shifts that would then need to be made in the State Department. He has strongly considered the possibility of Mr. Merchant moving into the Under Secretary position.

The President then said that there is one other thing very much on the Secretary's mind and on his own. Mr. Dulles' heart is in Foreign Relations, in which he has had tremendous interest for nearly sixty years. At the same time, he is anxious not to be in the way of the Secretary of State. He would like to be in position such that, if the President or the Secretary of State wanted his advice or counsel, he would be prepared to give it. For this purpose he would need some kind of status as a Consultant, and particularly would like to have his secretary, Miss Bernau, and an assistant, Mr. Greene, continue to work with him. The President asked me what could be done along these lines and I told him that we had means available of working out exactly what he and the Secretary had in mind. Mr. Herter suggested that Mr. Dulles be given a White House status and offered to detail State Department personnel into his office as might be desired. I told the President he need concern himself no more on the matter -- that I would undertake to work it out just as they wished.

The President then referred again to the question of filling the Under Secretary post. In addition to Mr. Merchant, he said that he and the Secretary had discussed Bob Murphy as a possibility. They felt that Mr. Murphy was very skillful as a negotiator. His convictions are somewhat less strong than those of Mr. Merchant. Mr. Herter said, with regard to Murphy, that Bruce is planning to leave Bonn sometime this fall and he would think that Murphy would be the ideal replacement in that post. The President agreed, although cautioning against permitting any dispersion of the State Department team. With regard to Mr. Merchant, the President said he had no knowledge whether the post would be acceptable to him. He did think he was a rather deeper thinker than most of the others. The President said that Mr. Herter might prefer to bring someone in from the outside.




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Mr. Herter said he would wish to give some thought to moving Dillon up from the economic Under Secretary. The President said that Dillon is doing an excellent job in that post, and has great influence in the Congress, and he would not want to see him moved from the position of providing the support for the Mutual Security program.

The President said that about Wednesday of next week we will have to make a statement regarding Secretary Dulles, and he would like to send up the nomination for his successor on the same day. In the meantime, two or three things remain to be tried, such as a serum developed by Salk which has shown some possible value in arresting such cancers. In any case, the President said he was going to make no mistakes in a hurry. He said that Mr. Herter should reach a judgment himself on the basis of the doctor's reports. He himself was going to regard the matter as settled if these reports were satisfactory. He cautioned, however, that the Secretary of State must go "bouncing around" to all sorts of summit meetings this summer, and did not want Mr. Herter to take the task on if he would break down under these difficulties.

The President next commented briefly on his recent exchange with Macmillan and said that he thought that we have now attained a clear understanding. Mr. Herter commented that he is meeting tomorrow with Mr. McElroy, Mr. McCone and Dr. Killian to consider whether any further steps in the direction proposed by Macmillan can be considered. The President said he saw some possibility that in announcing that we would forego testing for another year we would really be giving up nothing that we intend to do. Mr. Herter thought that Mr. Macmillan's proposal might have been put forward with the idea of having something in reserve for the summit meeting.

In concluding the discussion, the President asked Mr. Herter to see Secretary Dulles tomorrow and Mr. Herter agreed to do so.

  
A. J. Goodpaster  
Brigadier General, USA



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